

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

21

30 September 1949

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 228

SUBJECT: Evaluation of Report on Soviet Troop Movements in Manchuria

REFERENCE: Memorandum to DCI from Department of State, dated 23 September 1949, requesting evaluation of Peiping telegram (secret) No. 1578 (20 September 1949)

ENCLOSURES: A. CIA Intelligence Memorandum No. 228 (Preliminary)  
B. Intelligence Division, GSUSA, Evaluation of SDPT No. 1578, dated 20 Sept. 1949  
C. Office of Chief of Naval Operations Evaluation and Comments on SDPT No. 1578, dated 20 Sept. 1949  
D. Directorate of Intelligence, USAF, Evaluation of SDPT No. 1578, dated 20 Sept. 1949  
E. Reference telegram

1. Further study of subject report does not alter the conclusions reached in Intelligence Memorandum No. 228 (Preliminary), 27 September, a copy of which is attached as Enclosure A.

2. An evaluation prepared by the Intelligence Division, GSUSA, emphasizes that the report is not considered to be true. The Intelligence Division evaluation is substantially in agreement with Intelligence Memorandum No. 228 (Preliminary), and is attached as Enclosure B.

3. Evaluations by the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations and by the Directorate of Intelligence, USAF, also in substantial agreement, are attached as Enclosures C and D.

State Dept. declassification instructions on file

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DDA Memo, 4 Apr 77

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Date: 13/11/77 By: 821

ENCLOSURE A

27 September 1949

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM NO. 228 (Preliminary)

SUBJECT: Evaluation of Report on Soviet Troop Movements in Manchuria

REFERENCE: Peiping Telegram (secret) No. 1578 (20 Sept. 1949)

1. Conclusion.

a. ORE is of the opinion that the information contained in paragraphs two to four of Peiping Telegram No. 1578 (20 Sept.) is based wholly or largely on rumors. This report is the latest of several, received intermittently during the past two years, dealing with alleged Soviet military activity in Manchuria, none of which has been confirmed.

b. These rumors may have some basis in fact, however, inasmuch as there are indications of an increase in the tempo of Soviet activity and in the numbers of Soviet personnel in Manchuria and in North China. It is quite probable that the USSR is taking advantage of the present community of Sino-Soviet interest to solidify its position in Manchuria.

2. Evaluation of Paras. 2 and 3:

This report is so vague that it cannot be evaluated with confidence. The qualifications of the observer are obscure and his information appears to be based on hearsay. The report, in this respect, is similar to a number of earlier reports which, as the Consul-General remarks, "have been unsubstantiated."

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Past experience [REDACTED] reports has indicated that Chinese observers tend to be rather careless in their use of numbers, and are given to exaggeration. Also, regular troops may be confused with Soviet railway guards, which are known to be present in Manchuria.

The phrase "rail traffic Harbin-Manchuria" should probably be read either "Harbin-Manchouli," or (because Antung is mentioned) "Harbin-Korea," but neither of these readings illuminates the content sufficiently to permit an estimate of its significance. The "contemplated establishment of three military lines" would be a matter of top-secret military planning, which would certainly not be available to Chinese sources.

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ORE has no information with which to confirm the report of movements of tanks and troops between Harbin and Changchun; such movements are believed possible.

3. Evaluation of Para. 4:

a. "Explanation" I, i.e., that the USSR believes the US to be preparing for war in the Pacific:

ORE has no information to indicate that the USSR genuinely believes that the US is preparing to attack the USSR militarily in the near future.

b. "Explanation" III, i.e., that the USSR itself plans to launch a war in the near future:

ORE has no information to indicate that even with its "new" atomic capability the Soviet Union intends to resort to military aggression in the near future.

c. "Explanation" II, i.e., that the USSR is employing the threat of an imminent East-West (Communist vs. non-Communist) war as a means of gaining Chinese Communist acquiescence in the extension and consolidation of Soviet control in China, especially in Manchuria:

It is believed that the USSR occasionally, perhaps systematically, falsifies its estimate of the situation, in order to gain Chinese Communist acquiescence in the extension and consolidation of Soviet control in China and over the CCP. However, it is doubtful that the CCP leadership is convinced of the imminence of an armed conflict between the Communist and non-Communist nations, or that the USSR has found it necessary to employ the threat of imminent war in order to gain Chinese Communist acquiescence in the Soviet program in and toward China. It appears more likely that the USSR and the CCP leadership are agreed upon the necessity for increasing the defensive and offensive capabilities of the Far Eastern Communist bloc, in preparation for an eventual, but not immediate, military conflict with the West.

4. General Appraisal of Recent Reports Relating to Increased Soviet Activity in Manchuria:

In addition to the above report, of 100-150,000 Soviet troops present or scheduled to arrive in Manchuria, and of Soviet troop and tank movements in Manchuria, there have been recent reports of the arrival in Harbin of Soviet Marshal Rodion Malinovsky, together with a staff of 150 officers; and of the construction of barracks at Mukden, adequate to house 30,000 men, which are possibly for the use of Soviet military or railway personnel. These reports have not been confirmed.

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There is a general trend toward tightened Sino-Soviet control, or Soviet control with Chinese acquiescence, over Manchuria, particularly in the strategic Port Arthur Naval Base area. At the same time, the USSR is probably seeking to strengthen the lateral integration of Manchuria and North Korea.

It is of major importance to the USSR, politically and economically, to improve the rail system between Manchuria and North China. Inasmuch as railway control is used to spearhead Soviet penetration, the recent influx of Soviet railway personnel into Manchuria and North China indicates an increasingly successful extension of Soviet control. Soviet railway personnel have quasi-military status, and at times have included regular army and secret police officials.

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ENCLOSURE B

Intelligence Division, GSUSA, Evaluation of State Department Peiping  
Telegram No. 1578 Dated 20 September 1949

I. A. The Soviet garrison in Port Arthur-Dairen consists of 60,000 troops, with four divisions. Normal military traffic by land and sea between this detached garrison and the Soviet Union is not inconsiderable. This includes movements of leave personnel and replacements, occasional relief of complete small units, and movements of military supplies.

Despite frequent rumors to the contrary, it is believed that the only Soviet Army units of any significance in Manchuria are those in the Port Arthur-Dairen area. Many of the reports of Soviet troops in Manchuria are believed to refer to the uniformed Soviet railway guards who patrol the railways, which are jointly owned by the Soviet and Chinese governments. In addition, Soviet military and technical advisers to the Chinese Communists, many of them in uniform, are believed to be present in Manchuria and to a lesser extent elsewhere in China. The scale of such advisory support cannot be estimated.

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The report at hand is from a [REDACTED]. Such reports, without solid confirmation, have often proved to be seriously exaggerated or distorted.

No other reports confirm the "three military lines" reportedly being established, either in the sense of defense lines or military communications lines. Neither is there confirmation of a Harbin-Changchun troop and tank movement. The telegram does not state whether Soviet or Chinese troops and tanks are involved.

The report is believed either to be untrue, or to be a greatly magnified reflection of substantially normal military or railway guard traffic.

B. Paragraph 5 is concurred in.

C. Since the report is not accepted, none of the three cases is believed to be relevant. They are discussed, however, under II A below.

II. A. On the hypothesis that paragraphs two and three are true:

1. Case 1 is believed extremely improbable. The Soviets could hardly interpret evacuation of US citizens and their dependents as an indication of US preparations for war in the Pacific. They must

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appreciate that this action is motivated by the obvious danger to the individuals' safety, and that there are no other present indications of the types of US action that would have to accompany such preparations.

2. Case 2 is the most likely explanation. Soviet policy might logically consider the present as a suitable time to insure consolidation of control of Manchuria, and movement of large bodies of troops into the area would be one aspect of such consolidation.

3. Case 3 is believed unlikely, although it cannot be categorically dismissed. The probability that the Soviets are making preparations for an early offensive war must be considered in light of all indications from all areas.

B. Under the hypothesis that the report is true, other possible explanations are:

1. A move to stiffen the Chinese Communist armies and insure their continued loyalty by reinforcement with sizable troop units as well as by technical advisory aid.

2. Reinforcement of the Port Arthur garrison (although the force involved for such a purpose is excessive).

3. A move to strengthen the puppet North Korean regime and to support a move by it against South Korea. Soviet troops from the Vladivostok area could more effectively accomplish this objective, however.

4. A combination of any of the above possibilities.

C. Again on the assumption that the report is true, the following considerations bear on its effect on US security interests:

1. If the move does not extend beyond Manchuria, the effect of the move itself would be negligible in the near future. Soviet capabilities for attacking Japan or South Korea, or both, would not be materially enhanced.

2. If the objective of the move were to reinforce and stiffen the Chinese Communist armies and strengthen Soviet control over them, it would later enhance Soviet capabilities to threaten US security interests to the extent that it succeeded in this objective.

III. It is emphasized that the report is not considered to be true. It is likely to be founded on a not abnormally large troop or railway guard movement, with the incident exaggeration often found in reports from Far Eastern sub-sources.



ENCLOSURE C

Office of the Chief of Naval Operations Evaluation of and Comments on  
State Department Peiping Telegram No. 1578 Dated 20 September 1949

Part I - Evaluations.

A. Although the presence in Manchuria of Soviet tank units and troops has been repeatedly reported to ONI by fairly reliable sources, numbers and dispositions of troops have not been ascertained. Planes bearing Soviet markings have been observed in the area and Soviet naval vessels have been reliably reported operating in the Chih-li Gulf.

B. Paragraph 5. The presence of some Soviet troops in Manchuria can hardly be questioned.

C. Case 1. This statement seems to be based on the assumption that war always follows evacuation of foreigners from a trouble zone. It probably expresses the hope of certain non-Communist Chinese who desire liberation as soon as possible. This type of thinking abounds in postwar reports from Eastern Europe and cannot be supported by fact.

Case 2. This is the most logical of the three statements presented inasmuch as Soviet propaganda beamed to all the world stresses the fact that the US is preparing for war.

Case 3. This statement is not supported by any evidence.

Part II - Comments.

A. Case 2 is the most probable of the three cases. If it is publicized more than usual, the USSR is probably stressing "US aggression" as a smoke screen to divert Chinese attention from Soviet consolidation of influence in Manchuria.

B. No further solution.

C. No change in the present strategic picture. However, the presence of 100,000-150,000 Soviet troops in Manchuria would strengthen the already recognized Russian control of that area.

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ENCLOSURE D

Directorate of Intelligence, USAF, Evaluation of State Department  
Peiping Telegram No. 1578 Dated 20 September 1949

1. The Director of Intelligence, USAF, evaluates SECRET Peiping Telegram No. 1578 as follows:

a. Paragraphs two and three:

(1) Paragraph two is evaluated as F-6 (neither source nor content can be judged).

(2) Paragraph three is evaluated as F-3 (source cannot be judged; content is possibly true).

b. Paragraph five. The Director of Intelligence, USAF, agrees with the Consul General's comment regarding subject report and previous reports of the presence of Soviet troops in Manchuria.

c. Paragraph four. The Director of Intelligence, USAF, makes the following comments on Cases 1, 2, and 3 of this paragraph:

(1) Case 1 is considered unlikely in the light of information available to the United States Air Force and in the light of information concerning United States intentions presumably available to the USSR.

(2) Case 2 is considered logical and is generally in line with other reports of increasing Soviet dominance in Manchuria.

(3) Case 3 is considered illogical on the basis of available information but should not be ruled out, because of the corrupted Soviet thinking processes referred to in Par. four of subject telegram.

2. The Director of Intelligence, USAF, considers that if Pars. two and three of subject telegram were true the following reasoning would apply:

a. (1) Case 2 would be the most probable of the three cases listed in subject telegram. It would seem, however, that effective Soviet control of Manchuria could be achieved without the presence of large numbers of Soviet troops.

(2) Case 3 could be valid if, in addition to large-scale Soviet troop movements in Manchuria, there were also other necessary war preparations, including unusual Soviet Air Force activity. Information available to the Director of Intelligence, USAF, does not indicate such Soviet Air Force activity.

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b. A logical reason for Soviet troop movements into Manchuria would be that of giving moral and/or military support to North Korean military forces in the event that the long-anticipated hostilities against the Republic of Korea materialize. Even this eventuality, however, should not require 100,000 to 150,000 Soviet troops.

g. The Director of Intelligence, USAF, considers that any large-scale increase of Soviet armed forces in Manchuria would be a potential threat to US security interests, inasmuch as such forces could be used offensively against Korea, thus dealing a blow to US prestige in the Far East. Such a Soviet advance into southern Korea, if accompanied by a comparable increase in Soviet air and sea power, would constitute an increased threat to the US position in Japan and the island chain to the south.

ENCLOSURE E

INCOMING TELEGRAM

DEPARTMENT OF STATE - DIVISION OF COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORDS

Control 7825  
Rec'd September 20, 1949  
2:10 p.m.

FROM: Peiping  
TO: Secretary of State  
NO: 1578, September 20, 3 p.m.

PRIORITY

RECONTEL 1551 September 15.

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[REDACTED] that Soviet advisors being introduced into Harbin organizations in large numbers. Gave example: Soviet woman doctor recently became head women's department hospital and it was promptly ruled that hospital orders were ineffective without her countersignature.

Same source reports 100,000 or 150,000 Soviet troops are present or coming Manchuria, that rail traffic Harbin-Manchuria has been suspended one month and half (source unclear but noted Antung somehow come into picture) and said there is contemplated establishment three military lines, respectively, along Yalu River, north/south of Penhsihu, north/south of Mukden. He was unclear likewise regarding significance this project but designated them as first, second and third lines in above indicated order and said Soviets might anticipate Amvu attack through Korea.

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[REDACTED] reports from two sources movements of troops and tanks Harbin-Changchun.

Assuming movements Soviet troops into Manchuria, following, after native explanations, seems possible: 1) Noting similarity between evacuation American citizens and ones dependent 1940 and present, USSR believes USA in fact getting ready for war in Pacific; 2) Soviets are using allegation that war from side USA threatens in order get Chinese Communists acquiescence their program to end that their hold shall be fastened unshakably on Manchuria; or 3) USSR itself plans war relatively near future (see CONTELS 1276 August 1 and 1316 August 8). Personally judge second explanation most logical. Note informant, cited REFTEL, predicted Soviets were going to supply railway guards Manchuria. (Note possibility of use Sinkiang patterns particularly

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stationing Soviet brigade Hami in guise local troops.) But if 1) seems illogical it is to be remembered Soviets are excessively suspicious, and if 3) seems premature it is to be remarked that Soviets have so corrupted their own thinking that their timing may be different from that American side would consider facts warranted. All three alternatives, I feel are to be considered possible, if of unusual probability.

This said, note that above reports unconfirmed and are sent at face value, and that previous reports of presence Soviet troops Manchuria have been unsubstantiated.

CLUBB

CSB:EFC

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